

Important Legislative Bulletin for MTRS Retirees

Please READ this notice carefully and, as needed, TAKE ACTION

On November 18, 2011, Governor Deval Patrick signed Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2011, "An Act Providing for Pension Reform and Benefit Modernization." This law provides for increased benefits for certain retired members and survivors. As noted below, some of these new provisions require that affected members take action in order to receive these benefits. Please read this notice carefully and take action as needed.

These two provisions **REQUIRE ACTION** by eligible retirees:

■ **Same-sex marriage option change**

Members (and surviving spouses of such members) who entered into a same-sex marriage between May 17, 2004 and May 17, 2005, and who retired on or before May 17, 2004 under Option A or B, are allowed a one-time limited opportunity to change their retirement to Option C. If you are in this category, and wish to change to Option C, you must complete and submit the [Chapter 176 Same-Sex Marriage Option Change Application](#), which is available on our website at www.mass.gov/mtrs, by **July 1, 2012**.

■ **Pre-1975 maternity leave credit**

Members who took a maternity leave of absence or resigned from teaching due to maternity before January 1, 1975, and who retired before September 1, 2000 at less than the 80% maximum benefit, are eligible to receive up to 4 years of creditable service. If you are in this category, you must complete and submit a *Chapter 176 Pre-1975 Maternity Leave Credit Application*, which we will be mailing to all potentially eligible members at the end of February. If you do not receive an application in the mail from us by March 14, 2012, please call us at 617-679-6877 to request an application.

The remaining provisions are noted below for your reference. These will be implemented by the MTRS and do **not** require action by eligible retirees.

■ **Increase in the COLA base from \$12,000 to \$13,000**

All future cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) approved by the Legislature will be paid on the first \$13,000 of the annual benefit for all members and survivors who have been receiving their benefits for at least one full fiscal year. As COLAs are based on the increase in the Consumer Price Index or 3%, whichever is less, the maximum annual COLA amount is now \$390.

■ **Increase in the minimum annual pension for members with at least 25 years of creditable service from \$10,000 to \$15,000**

Effective April 2, 2012, the minimum pension for members who retired, or who retire in the future, with at least 25 years of creditable service is increased from \$10,000/year to \$15,000/year (\$1,250/month). We will identify and adjust eligible retirees' benefit payments as soon as possible after April 2012.

■ **Increase in the minimum monthly spousal survivor benefit from \$250 to \$500**

Effective April 2, 2012, the minimum benefit paid to the surviving spouse of a member who dies while in service increases from \$250/month to \$500/month. We will identify and adjust eligible survivors' benefit payments as soon as possible after April 2012.

■ **Increase in the post-retirement earnings limit, for retirees who return to Massachusetts public service, of \$15,000/year**

Effective April 2, 2012, members retired for at least one year may earn an additional \$15,000/year in post-retirement earnings from Massachusetts public employers. The new limit will equal the difference between the salary being paid for the member's former position and the amount of his or her retirement benefit, plus \$15,000.

For more
information on
Chapter 176 and
these provisions,
please visit our
website at
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